



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION FROM PARENTS, FAMILIES & FRIENDS OF LESBIANS & GAYS (PFLAG) - METRO DC CHAPTER

Many families have gay members. And it is love and understanding that enables those families to flourish. PFLAG is here to help. The purpose of this flyer is to provide you with information you and your family members should find useful, particularly when confronted by myths about what it means to be gay.

What do the mainstream medical and mental health professional associations say about sexual orientation?

They all agree that if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning, there is nothing wrong with you. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics -- the mainstream professional association for pediatricians -- informs us that homosexuality is not a mental disorder, and further concludes that:

- **Sexual orientation is not a choice; that is, individuals do not choose to be homosexual or heterosexual, nor is it something "that voluntarily can be changed."**
- There is no scientific evidence that abnormal parenting, sexual abuse, or other adverse life events influence sexual orientation.
- Gay and lesbian individuals can be successful parents themselves.

Source: <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;113/6/1827>

How does religion fit into this? Many religious denominations and congregations are completely affirming of LGBT people, and Metro DC PFLAG can refer you to information specific to your own religion, including local gay-friendly congregations. While there are denominations that are struggling with old theological interpretations regarding sexual orientation and identity, it is important to know that there are faith communities that are welcoming.

Why are people gay? What does the medical community say about so-called reparative "therapies"? The AAP reports that while it is not known precisely what causes people to be gay, recent research has led scientists to favor "biologically based theories." The American Psychological Association's publication *Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel* (<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/just-the-facts.pdf>) notes that the "nation's leading professional medical, health, and mental health organizations do not support efforts to change young people's sexual orientation through therapy and have raised serious concerns about the potential harm from such efforts." **Indeed, the American Medical Assn. explicitly opposes "therapies" based on the incorrect premise that gay people are ill or that they should change their sexual orientation.** See <http://community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=503> (AMA Resolution (H-160.991 Health Care Needs of the Homosexual Population)

Many gay people and their families seek help in working through their feelings about coming out as gay, and also as transgender. Metro DC PFLAG sponsors support groups in which families help one another through this journey. We also have information on private therapists and counselors who are supportive and are experienced in dealing with these issues.

For more information, contact METRO DC PFLAG at (202) 638-3852, www.pflagdc.org or info@pflagdc.org. Ask for our special brochure for parents, *Our Daughters and Sons*. You can also call our Helpline at (301)-439-3524, or call The Trevor Project's 24/7 Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386. Other groups you may find useful are the Rainbow Youth Alliance (uucr.org/rainbow.php), Rockville Open House (rockvilleopenhouse.org), and the Family Acceptance Project (familyproject.sfsu.edu).

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